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ABSTRACT

Twenty-five instructors from 11 different community colleges and 13 different disciplines participated in a six week institute at Texas A&M University, geared to improving teaching in junior and community colleges. The participants had an average of 5.08 years of experience in college level teaching, and all had at least a master's degree. Each participant received 15 contact hours of skill training in Flanders Interaction Analysis, a 10 category observation system which classifies any verbal statement made in a classroom by an instructor or student, thus facilitating study of teacher/student verbal interaction. The participants also engaged in microteaching experiences, concentrating on skills of fluency in asking questions, reinforcement, probing questions, and various higher order questions. This procedure allowed participants to focus on individual technical teaching skills. Other activities included audio-tutorial programs, multiple-choice test construction and test-item analysis, independent listening, assigned readings, behavioral objectives, small group discussions, and simulation. Evaluations collected throughout the program indicate that the training received by the participants contributed to changes in their attitudes, opinions, and behavior related to teaching effectiveness. (Author/NHM)

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# Improving Junior and Community College Instruction

Glenn R. Johnson
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This article discusses a six weeks institute geared to improving teaching in Junior and Community Colleges. Twenty-five instructors from eleven different Junior/Community Colleges participated in the program offered at Texas A&M University. Their major subject matter areas included history, biology, mathematics, English, sociology, industrial arts, psychology, music, business, zoology, speech/drama, and health and physical education. They had an average of 5.08 years of experience in teaching at the college level; and, one had an earned doctorate while the remaining twenty-four had at least a master's degree.

Each college instructor received fifteen contact hours of skill training in Flanders Interaction Analysis (FIA). FIA is a ten category observation system developed by Dr. Ned A. Flanders and his associates so any verbal statement made in a classroom by an instructor or a student could be identified with one of the ten categories. A trained observer during each three second period of time decides which category best represents the verbal interaction taking place and writes down the numeral for that category while observing the next three second period of time. This results in a series of numerals being written in sequence and preserves the order in which the behavior occured. The ten categories of Flanders Interaction Analysis with a brief description of each appear on the next page.

If one accepts the idea that teaching involves at least to some extent the reciprocal communication between two or more people (one being referred to as the instructor), then we have a system (FIA) we can use to study one aspect of

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SUMMARY OF FLANDERS'

CATEGORIES FOR INTERACTION ANALYSIS

TEACHER TALK

INDIRECT INFLUENCE

1. * ACCEPTS FEELING: accepts and clarifies the feeling tone of the students in a nonthreatening manner. Feelings may be positive or negative. Predicting or recalling feelings is included.

2. * PRAISES OR ENCOURAGES: praises or encourages student action or behavior. Jokes that release tension, but not at the expense of another individual: nodding head, or saying "um hm?" or "go on" are included.

3. * ACCEPTS OR USES IDEAS OF STUDENTS: clarifying, building, or developing ideas suggested by a student. As teacher brings more of his own ideas into play, shift to Category 5.

4. * ASKS QUESTIONS: asking a question about content or procedure with the intent that a student answer.

DIRECT INFLUENCE

5. * LECTURING: giving facts or opinions about content or procedures; expressing his own ideas, asking rhetorical questions.

6. * GIVING DIRECTIONS: directions, commands, or orders with which a student is expected to comply.

7. * CRITICIZING OR JUSTIFYING AUTHORITY: statements intended to change student behavior from nonacceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he is doing; extreme self-reference.

STUDENT TALK

8. * STUDENT TALK-RESPONSE: talk by students in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits student statement.

9. * STUDENT TALK-INITIATION: talk by students, which they initiate. If "calling on" student is only to indicate who may talk next, observer must decide whether student wanted to talk. If he did, use this category.

10. * SILENCE OR CONFUSION: pauses, short periods of silence, and periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer.

* There is NO scale implied by these numbers. Each number is classificatory; it designates a particular kind of communication event. To write these numbers down during observation is to enumerate--not to judge a position on a scale.

teacher variables (verbal interaction with students). There is some evidence that people trained to analyze this phase of instruction also change their own verbal behavior.[1]

Microteaching was another major activity for the Junior/Community College instructors. The participants engaged in microteaching experiences concentrating on skills of fluency in asking questions, reinforcement, probing questions, and various higher order questions. First, a videotaped protocal along with a typed script was presented to the participants for each of the skill areas. In the microteaching laboratory, each participant taught a lesson using his or her own subject specialty for content while focusing upon one of the specific skills; e.g., probing questions. Each lesson was videotaped, played back over a T.V. monitor, and critiqued for the participant.

The procedure of focusing on one technical teaching skill during micro-teaching has been quite successful according to various reports involving the practice.[2] These scaled-down lessons of five-to-ten minutes in length involving only three or four students enables the instructor to concentrate on a specific teaching skill away from the usual classroom setting where he normally confronts fifty to three hundred students. However, microteaching is not 'make believe': the professor really teaches, and the three or four students really learn. The lesson is short only because the teacher is required to focus on specific skills for analysis.

Other activities included audio-tutorial programs, multiple-choice test construction and test-item analysis, independent listening, assigned readings, behavioral objectives, brainstorming, buzz groups, small group discussions, and simulation. On the last day of the concentrated six weeks phase of the program, a Likert scale evaluation form was completed by each of the participants.

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[1] Interaction Analysis: Selected Papers, Wash., D.C. : Association of Teacher Eduators and ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, ATE Research Bulletin No. 10, 1971

[2] Microteaching: Definition and Overview, Washington, D.C.: PREP, National Center for Educational Communication, U.S. office of Education (undated).

They were to respond to the items using the following scale: 5: strongly agree, 4: agree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 2: disagree, 1: strongly disagree.

The response to the item "the institute was worthwhile" revealed a mean of 4.62 with 62% marking 'strongly agree'. The response to "microteaching was worthwhile" revealed a mean of 4.66 with 72% marking 'strongly agree'. "The sessions on test construction were worthwhile" received a mean of 4.33 with 36% marking 'strongly agree'.

Another aspect of the program involved the use of a Delphi process which specifies repeated measurement and controlled feedback. The first round of the survey was conducted on the opening day of the six weeks institute. The median recorded for each teaching technique was computed and on the last day of the institute the participants were informed of their old answer, the median for each technique, and provided another opportunity to express their opinions. These second round responses were again tabulated and the above procedure was repeated for the third round in November when the participants were back at their Junior/Community Colleges. The Likert scale for the Delphi process was: 5: very effective, 4: effective, 3: neither effective nor ineffective, 2: ineffective, 1: very ineffective.

The most effective teaching techniques for Junior/Community College settings revealed by the Delphi technique (mean scores of 4.0 or higher) involved the following: lecture with visual aides, demonstrations, small group discussions, seminars, assigned readings, individual projects, behavioral objectives, reinforcement, various questioning strategies, audio-tutorial units, interaction analysis, and cognitive tasks (concept development, interpreting data, and applying principles).

Another phase incorporated a Likert scale survey which asked the participants to identify those aspects of the program that enhanced their teaching of minority students. The most effective (mean scores of 4.0 or higher) involved: reinforcement,

interaction analysis, behavioral objectives, demonstration, audio-tutorial units, lecture with visual aides, and various questioning strategies.

The final phase of the program involved follow-up visits to each participant's college and interviews with immediate supervisors. The follow-up visits confirmed much of the earlier feedback. Participants provided information related to implementing aspects of the program; e.g., improved construction of instructor-made examinations, audio-tutorial units, seminar techniques, behavioral objectives, interaction analysis, microteaching.

The participant's immediate supervisor was asked to respond to the following question: "Did the Junior/Community College Institute have a favorable impact upon the participant(s) identified with your department?" The following Likert scale was used for the data: 5: very strong, 4: strong, 3: satisfactory, 2: weak, 1: very weak. The mean response was 4.48 with 52% of the supervisors marking the "very strong" category.

The data collected throughout the total program appear to support the conclusion that the training received by the participants contributed to changes in their attitudes, opinions, and behavior related to effectiveness in teaching.

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